



DATE: June 11, 2008

TO: MASA and MASSP members

FROM: William H. Mayes, MASA Executive Director
Jim Ballard, MASSP Executive Director

RE: 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate reporting

As you all know, CEPI has provided districts with their new "4-year cohort" graduation rates via the secure Graduation/Dropout Review and Comment (GAD) application. Each district has one or more authorized users with access. These preliminary reports have been released to districts in order to let them review, clarify, and prepare for public release of this data with the Michigan High School Report Card sometime in early August 2008. However, recent news articles reveal that some districts have provided their preliminary graduation rates to reporters who are already writing stories.

We, along with CEPI, are concerned that early release of graduation rate data by some districts will put pressure on other district leaders to do so before they or their staff members are fully prepared to answer questions by the media and the public. As you might imagine, the news regarding 4-year cohort graduation rates will not be positive for many districts, and will pose a challenge for districts to shape their messages in a positive way.

In order to assist districts with this challenge, CEPI has been working with the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and the Michigan School Public Relations Association (MSPRA) to develop a communications plan and a [media toolkit](#) for districts to use in conjunction with a planned joint public release in August. That toolkit contains answers to Frequently Asked Questions, talking points for internal and external audiences, and sample letters and newsletter articles describing the old and the new grad rate calculation methods.

In addition, CEPI and the MDE have been working consistently with the media over the past year to educate them about the differences between the old and new grad rate calculation processes. In this way, the hope was to create a more positive state-wide shaping of this message closer to August. While the communications toolkit posted at www.michiganedusource.org is thorough and easy-to-use, it will require some time for administrators to digest it and make it usable by their staff.

We hope that in the interest of your own district and that of your neighbors and colleagues you refrain from releasing this year's graduation rate data to local media until August. In this way, you will allow a full implementation of the statewide communication plan. In addition, you will ensure each school and district leader has the opportunity to review the [Graduation Rates Communications Toolkit](#) and to prepare a local communication plan.

Review the Grad Rate Communications Toolkit at www.michiganedusource.org/GradRatesToolkit.htm.